

0CT 19 1958

Approved For Release 2001/08/20 : CIA-RDP70-000

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A BOOK FOR TODAY

The German Surrender in Italy

By CARTER BROOK JONES

THE SECRET SURRENDER.

By Allen Dulles. Harper & Row. 268 pages. \$5.95.

Back of the German surrender in Italy, May 2, 1945, five days before V-E Day, is a complex story of secret negotiations and of intrigue within the German armies.

Allen Dulles could piece together these hidden fragments of history and weave them into a narrative better than anyone else because he was the man around whom the entire suppressed situation revolved. As chief European agent of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in the final years of the war, with headquarters in neutral Switzerland, he directed and encouraged concealed conferences with German military leaders who continued to plot against Hitler after the attempt on his life in July, 1944, failed.

Dulles, who after the war was director of the Central Intelligence Agency for eight years, was sent to Europe in November of 1942 by Gen. William J. (Wild Bill) Donovan, a World War I hero who headed the OSS. Dulles was attached to the American legation (now of course an embassy) at Berne as special assistant to the minister.

"My real tasks, however," he explains, "were to gather information about the Nazis and Fascists in the areas adjacent to Switzerland which

were under the rule of Hitler or Mussolini."

With a diplomatic experience dating back to World War I and fluency in the European languages, Dulles was able to set up not only a listening post receptive to what was going on behind the enemy lines but an apparatus of agents and communications.

Why, it might be asked, did the surrender in Italy matter so much when the Germans had been driven out of most of it, when their armies had been routed from France and Russia and were crumbling behind the borders of Germany, when their surrender was only days off?

For one thing, it had been hoped that the Germans in Italy would surrender long before they did on May 2. For another, this surrender helped bring about the final decisive surrender of the western forces to the Americans, British and Russians. A third consideration was the scorched-earth policy of retreat in Italy which Hitler had ordered when his Italian campaign began to go to pieces. Italy's vast art treasures were to be destroyed if they could not be shipped to Germany. The Germans, too, might have retreated into the Austrian and Italian Alps to fight on indefinitely if some of their generals had not been willing to give up.

Dulles' most valuable aide

in approaching the anti-Hitler resistance in the German army and in arranging secret meetings was a naturalized American of German birth living in Switzerland—Gero von Schutze Gaevernitz. He risked his life many times to keep these negotiations going.

Of equal importance in the later stages was, of all persons, an SS general, Karl Wolff. He not only was in command of the SS troops in Italy, but had a special rank and was answerable only to Heinrich Himmler and Hitler himself. Wolff worked ceaselessly to bring about a surrender, narrowly escaping execution for treason when German intelligence discovered his activities. He also helped save priceless art in Northern Italy. In 1964, when he was 64, a German court found him guilty of war crimes and sentenced him to 15 years. It might seem that American influence could have saved him. He had nothing to do with the extermination of Jews, the evidence indicated, and he surely had atoned for whatever else he might have done.

Although Dulles has written a straightforward account, with no special effort at suspense, the facts themselves are absorbing. And exciting moments are not infrequent. The book, too, is a first-hand contribution to the history of World War II.